

## Bats and Mosquitoes

(The following is reprinted from an article entitled "Mythical Mosquito Control", by Lee Mitchell, in Wing Beats, Summer 1992. Wing Beats is a trade magazine of the Florida Mosquito Control Association.)

More recently some naturalists have become interested in the welfare of bats and have noted the value of insectivorous species in controlling mosquito populations. They have subsequently recommended the construction of bat houses for the protection and propagation of those species that have been evicted from caves or human residences. That such an idea is a new one may be quickly refuted by referring to the literature.

During the 1920's, several large bat towers were constructed near San Antonio, Texas and Key West and Tampa, Florida with the intent of controlling malarial mosquitoes with high numbers of insect-eating bats. Mosquito populations were not reduced but a large accumulation of guano (bat feces) was sold at a profit.

The bats of temperate regions remain almost exclusively insectivorous. As with purple martins, bat food consists mainly of beetles, wasps, ants, flies, stoneflies, mayflies, moths, and grasshoppers. Mosquitoes make up less than 1 percent of their diet although the percentage may be higher when mosquitoes are abundant. The evidence from stomach analysis and feces examination show that insectivorous bats do help regulate some insect populations, both beneficial and pest species - but not mosquitoes. However, bats are worthy of our protection regardless of their capacity or proclivity to consume pest or vector populations of mosquitoes.

NOTE: While vertebrate predators, such as bats, may consume mosquitoes, there is no scientific evidence to support their use as an effective mosquito management tool. However, if you would like more information on bats and instructions on how to build a bat house, please call this office at (352) 343-9682, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.